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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE,

&c. &c.

It is impossible to address such an assembly as I see before me without great diffidence and great anxiety ; and I may, perhaps, plead more than the usual excuse for indulging in the egotism which is natural to an introductory lecture. If the science of Political Economy were in the situation in which, I trust, a very few years, and perhaps the exertions of some of those whom I am addressing, will place it ; if its objects were clearly understood, its terms precisely defined, its general principles universally admitted ; if it ranked in public estimation, as then it will rank, among the first of moral sciences in interest and in utility, I should feel, as I now feel, great diffidence in my own powers, and the necessity of relying very much on

your candour and indulgence. But this is not the situation of the science. It is, at present, in that state of imperfect development, which, though most attractive to the student who has made some proficiency, throws the greatest difficulty in the way of a beginner, and, consequently, of a teacher, and offers the fairest scope to the objections of an idle or an interested adversary.

When I consider how numerous those adversaries are, and how widely diffused are the prejudices which they excite and propagate, all apprehension for myself is lost in the fear that the failures of the professor may be imputed to his subject, and that the vague abstractions, the details, the truisms, the obscurities, and the inconsistencies which, with all my care, will, I have no doubt, be found in my lectures, may rather deter those among my hearers to whom the subject is new from proceeding in a study which, in my hands, may appear uninteresting, than lead them to prosecute it in the writings of the great masters of the science, and by patient meditation on the results of their own experience.

To prevent, as far as I am able, such a result, I shall devote this lecture to an attempt to explain the objects of Political Economy, and the inquiries through which they are to be effected ; and it will, I think, appear that the human faculties cannot be engaged in a pursuit more useful in its result, or more interesting in its progress.

If we compare the present situation of the people of England with that of their predecessors at the time of Cæsar's invasion ; if we contrast the warm and dry cottage of the present labourer, its chimney and glass windows, (luxuries not enjoyed by Cæsar himself,) the linen and woollen clothing of himself and his family, the steel, and glass and earthenware with which his table is furnished, the Asiatic and American ingredients of his food, and above all, his safety from personal injury, and his calm security that to-morrow will bring with it the comforts that have been enjoyed to-day ;—if, I repeat, we contrast all these sources of enjoyment with the dark and smoky burrows of the Brigantes, or the Cantii, their clothing of skins, their food

confined to milk and flesh, and their constant exposure to famine and to violence, we shall be inclined to think those who are lowest in modern society richer than the chiefs of their rude predecessors. And if we consider that the same space of ground which afforded an uncertain subsistence to a hundred, or probably fewer, savages, now supports with ease more than a thousand labourers, and, perhaps, a hundred individuals beside, each consuming more commodities than the labour of a whole tribe of Ancient Britons could have produced or purchased, we may at first be led to doubt whether our ancestors enjoyed the same natural advantages as ourselves ; whether their sun was as warm, their soil as fertile, or their bodies as strong, as our own.

But let us substitute distance of space for distance of time ; and, instead of comparing the situations of the same country at different periods, compare different countries at the same period, and we shall find a still more striking discrepancy. The inhabitant of South America enjoys a soil

and a climate, not superior merely to our own, but combining all the advantages of every climate and soil possessed by the remainder of the world. His vallies have all the exuberance of the tropics, and his mountain-plains unite the temperature of Europe to a fertility of which Europe offers no example. Nature collects for him, within the space of a morning's walk, the fruits and vegetables which she has elsewhere separated by thousands of miles. She has given him inexhaustible forests, has covered his plains with wild cattle and horses, filled his mountains with mineral treasures, and intersected all the eastern face of his country with rivers, to which our Rhine and Danube are merely brooks. But the possessor of these riches is poor and miserable. With all the materials of clothing offered to him almost spontaneously, he is ill-clad; with the most productive of soils, he is ill-fed; though we are told that the labour of a week will there procure subsistence for a year, famines are of frequent occurrence; the hut of the Indian, and the residence of

the landed proprietor are alike destitute of furniture and convenience; and South America, helpless and indigent with all her natural advantages, seems to rely for support and improvement on a very small portion of the surplus wealth of England.

It is impossible to consider these phenomena without feeling anxious to account for them; to discover whether they are occasioned by circumstances unsusceptible of investigation, or regulation, or by causes which can be ascertained, and may be within human control. To us, as Englishmen, it is of still deeper interest to inquire whether the causes of our superiority are still in operation, and whether their force is capable of being increased or diminished; whether England has run her full career of wealth and improvement, but stands safe where she is; or, whether to remain stationary is impossible, and it depends on her institutions and her habits, on her government, and on her people, whether she shall recede or continue to advance.

The answer to all these questions must be sought in the science which teaches in what wealth consists,—by what agents it is produced,—and according to what laws it is distributed,—and what are the institutions and customs by which production may be facilitated and distribution regulated, so as to give the largest possible amount of wealth to each individual. And this science is Political Economy.

If my definition be correct, the science of Political Economy may be divided into two great branches,—the theoretic and the practical. The first, or theoretic branch, that which explains the nature, production, and distribution of wealth, will be found to rest on a very few general propositions, which are the result of observation, or consciousness, and which almost every man, as soon as he hears them, admits, as familiar to his thoughts, or at least, as included in his previous knowledge.

Its conclusions are also nearly as general as its premises ;—those which relate to the nature and

production of wealth, are universally true : and, though those which relate to the distribution of wealth, are liable to be affected by peculiar institutions of particular countries,—in the cases, for instance, of slavery, corn-laws, or poor-laws,—the natural state of things can be laid down as the general rule, and the anomalies produced by particular disturbing causes can be afterwards accounted for.

The practical branch of the science, that of which the office is to ascertain what institutions are most favourable to wealth, is a far more arduous study. Many of its premises, indeed, rest on the same evidence as those of the first branch ; for they are the conclusions of that branch :—but it has many which depend on induction from phenomena, numerous, difficult of enumeration, and of which the real sequence often differs widely from the apparent one. The machinery of civilized society is worked by so many antagonist springs ; the dislike of labour, the desire for immediate enjoyment, and the love of accumulation are so per-

petually counteracting one another, and they produce such opposite conduct, not only in different individuals, but in whole masses of people, that we are liable to the greatest mistakes when we endeavour to assign motives to past conduct, or to predict the conduct which a new motive will produce.

For instance, the questions, whether the poor-laws have had a tendency to diminish or increase the population of England? Whether the testamentary laws of France are favourable or unfavourable to the wealth of that country? Whether the wealth of England has been increased or diminished by her colonies? Whether tithes fall principally on the consumer or on the landlord? and many others, of which the facts seem to lie before our eyes, have been diligently and acutely investigated, and are still, perhaps, undecided.

And, if we are often unable to trace all the consequences of institutions with which we have been long familiar, how much more difficult must it be to predict the effects of measures which are still untried!

Inattention to the distinction between the practical and the theoretic branches of Political Economy, appears to me to have occasioned much of the difference of opinion which prevails as to the certainty of its conclusions. Those who assert that it approaches to the accuracy of logic or mechanics, must either have confined their attention to the theoretic branch, or have forgotten that the practical branch must sometimes draw its premises from particular facts, respecting particular climates, soils, and seasons; and must sometimes take into account the influence of every human passion and appetite, under every modification of government and knowledge.

On the other hand, the uncertainty which affects many of the investigations of Political Economists, has been rashly attributed to them all. Because from probable premises they have deduced only probable conclusions, it has been sometimes supposed that probability, and that of a low degree, is all they can attain.

I hope in the course of these Lectures to prove

the truth of my statement, that the theoretic branch of the science, that which treats of the nature, production and distribution of wealth,—is capable of all the certainty that can belong to any science, not founded exclusively on definitions; and I hope, also, to show that many conclusions, and those of the highest importance, in the practical branch, rest so immediately on the conclusions of the theoretic branch as to possess equal certainty and universality. x

The slight sketch which I have given of the objects of the science, affords me a better opportunity than, perhaps, I shall have hereafter, of considering some objections that may be made, if not to the study itself, at least to the rank in which I have placed it.

The first is, that as the pursuit of wealth is one of the humblest of human occupations, far inferior to the pursuit of virtue, or of knowledge, or even of reputation; and as the possession of wealth is not necessarily joined—perhaps, it will be said, is not conducive—to happiness, a science of which the

only subject is wealth, cannot claim to rank as the first, or nearly the first, of the moral sciences.

My answer is, first, that the pursuit of wealth, that is, the endeavour to accumulate the means of future subsistence and enjoyment, is, to the mass of mankind, the great source of moral improvement. When does a labourer become sober and industrious, attentive to his health and to his character?—as soon as he begins to save. No institution could be more beneficial to the morals of the lower orders, that is, to at least nine-tenths of the whole body of any people, than one which should increase their power and their wish to accumulate : none more mischievous than one which should diminish the motives and the means to save. If we have institutions eminently calculated to produce both the benefit and the mischief, how valuable must the science be that teaches us to discriminate between them, to extend the one, and to remove, or diminish, or, at least, not to extend, the other !

I answer, in the second place, that it is, perhaps,

true, that the wealth which enables one man to command the labour of hundreds or of thousands, such wealth as raised Chatsworth, or Fonthill, may not be favourable to the happiness of its possessor; and, if this be so, Political Economy will best teach us to avoid creating or perpetuating institutions, which promote such inconvenient agglomerations. But that diffusion of wealth which alone entitles *a people* to be called rich; that state of society in which the productiveness of labour, and the mode in which it is applied, secure to the labouring classes all the necessaries and some of the conveniences of life, seems to be, not merely conducive, but essential both to their morals and their happiness. This appears to me so self-evident, that I am almost ashamed of taking up your time by proving it. But, if proof be wanted, we have only to consider what are the effects on the human character of the opposite state of society; a state in which the mass of the people is habitually confined to a bare subsistence, and, consequently, exposed from time to time,

from the accidents of trade, or of the seasons, to absolute want. I will not dwell on the misery of those on whom actual want does fall: it is too painful to be steadfastly contemplated, and forms only a small part of the evil. The great evil is the general feeling of insecurity: the fear which must beset almost every man, whose labour produces him only a subsistence, and who has no resource against contingencies, that at some period, how near he cannot tell, the want under which he has seen others sink may reach himself.

X / The principal sources of happiness are the social affections; but (to use the words of a powerful writer, and a very accurate observer of human nature) “the man whose thoughts are perpetually
“harassed by the torment of immediate, or the
“dread of future want, loses the power of bene-
“volent sympathy with his fellow-creatures;
“loses the virtuous feeling of a desire for their
“pleasures, and an aversion to their pains;
“rather, perhaps, hates their pleasures as ren-
“dering the sense of his own misery more pun-

“gent ; desires their pains, as rendering the sense
“of that misery the less. This is the explanation
“of the cruel and ferocious character which uni-
“formly accompanies the hardships of savage
“life. Another result of suffering is, that it pro-
“duces an extraordinary greediness for immediate
“gratification ; a violent propensity to seek com-
“pensation from any sensual indulgence which
“is within the reach. It is a consequence that
“the poorest individuals in civilized society are
“the most intemperate ; the least capable of
“denying themselves any pleasure, however
“hurtful, which they can command. Hence their
“passion for intoxicating liquors ; and hence,
“because he is still more wretched, the still more
“furious passion for them in the savage.”*

It is scarcely necessary to add that such a population must be grossly ignorant. The desire for knowledge is one of the last results of refinement ; it requires, in general, to have been im-

* History of British India, b. 6. c. 6.

planted in the mind during childhood; and it is absurd to suppose that persons thus situated would have the power or the will to devote much to the education of their children. A further consequence is the absence of all real religion: for the religion of the grossly ignorant, if they have any, scarcely ever amounts to more than a debasing superstition.

It is impossible that, under such circumstances, there should be an effectual administration of justice. The law has few terrors for a man who has nothing to lose. Its efficiency, too, is almost altogether dependent on the support it receives from the general body of the people. Among a very poor, and consequently, a very ignorant people, sympathy is almost always in favour of the offender: his flight is favoured, his lurking-places are concealed, the witnesses against him are intimidated, and he escapes even after he has become the subject of prosecution: but more frequently he escapes even prosecution. Outrages are committed in the presence of hundreds, and we are

told that not one of the perpetrators can be identified; that is, though they are well known, the witnesses conceal their knowledge.

When such is the character of the bulk of the community, there can be no security for the persons or property of any of its members. The three great restraints from crime,—religion, good feeling, and law, have, as we have seen, little force; while the great source of crime, the passion for immediate enjoyment, acquires additional strength.

I do not expect to be accused of having exaggerated the wretchedness of a country in which the bulk of the people are subject to the pressure or the apprehension of want. But I may be told, perhaps, that I have supposed an extreme case, a danger to which no civilized society is exposed, to provide against which is a waste of labour. ✓

My answer is, first, that the miserable situation which I have described has, up to the present time, been that of many of the inhabitants of every densely peopled country.

Mr. Mylne has shown (Life Annuities, vol. ii. p. 390,) that in England any material reduction in the price of wheat is almost always accompanied by a decrease in the number of burials; and that any material rise in the price is generally attended by a corresponding increase in the burials. This proves that there must be almost always in this country a considerable number of persons just vibrating between the possession and the want of mere food; whom an inclination of the price, one way or the other, saves or destroys. In London alone, when London was far less populous than it is now, Dr. Colquhoun estimated that there were never less than 20,000 persons who rose in the morning ignorant what means—whether casual employment, pillage, or mendicity—would give them food for the day, or shelter for the ensuing night. While I am now speaking, there are thousands and tens of thousands of families of hand-weavers, in Lancashire and Yorkshire, who are working fourteen hours a day for what will scarcely support animal existence. And those are, perhaps, still

more numerous who cannot obtain regular employment even on such terms as these, but are eking out the deficiency of their wages by the gradual sale of their little stock of clothes and furniture. Unless we are prepared to maintain that there can be no measures by which the number of persons so situated can be increased or diminished, we are, at least, bound to inquire into the pretensions of the science which professes to point out those measures.

But it is not true that the extreme case of general pauperism, which I have described, is one to which no civilized society can be exposed. A large portion of the British Empire has been sinking into it during the last thirty years, and apparently with increased rapidity.

The House of Commons' Committee, appointed in the beginning of this year to consider the expediency of encouraging emigration from the United Kingdom, commence their Report by stating, as among the results of the evidence collected by them, "That there are extensive districts in

“ Ireland, and districts in England and Scotland,
“ where the population is at the present moment
“ redundant ; in other words, where there exists
“ a very considerable proportion of able-bodied
“ and active labourers, beyond that number to
“ which any existing demand for labour can afford
“ employment. That the effect of this redundancy
“ is not only to reduce a part of this population
“ to a great degree of destitution and misery, but
“ also to deteriorate the general condition of the
“ labouring classes. That by its producing a
“ supply of labour in excess, as compared with
“ the demand, the wages of labour are necessa-
“ rily reduced to a minimum, which is utterly
“ insufficient to supply that population with those
“ means of support and subsistence which are ne-
“ cessary to secure a healthy and satisfactory con-
“ dition of the community. That in England this
“ redundant population has been, in part, sup-
“ ported by a parochial rate, which, according to
“ the reports and evidence of former committees
“ specially appointed to consider the subject,

“ threatens, in its extreme tendency, to absorb the
“ whole rental of the country. And that in Ire-
“ land, where no such parochial rate exists by
“ law, and where the redundancy is found in a still
“ greater degree, a considerable part of the popu-
“ lation is dependent for the means of support on
“ the precarious source of charity, or is *compelled*
“ to resort to habits of plunder and spoliation
“ for the actual means of subsistence.”

If we turn to the Minutes, we shall find from Mr. Bodkin's evidence (p. 214) that the hope of being employed by the Mendicity Society in breaking stones at six-pence or eight-pence per day, a work from which English paupers absconded, produced such an emigration from the south of Ireland to London, that the Society were forced to make a distinction between the applicants, and to refuse the employment to any who had not resided in this country for a certain time. We shall find Mr. Becher stating (p. 193) that “almost any
“ change of situation would be for the benefit of
“ the lower class in Munster:”—the Bishop of

X Limerick (p. 144), that "the existing state of things is truly frightful." Mr. Gabbitt (p. 127) describes the county of Limerick as "the richest" (that is, I apprehend, the most fertile) "country in the world." Yet he states that the *best* description of labourers, those *best* able to support a family, as soon as they can amass a sum sufficient to pay their passage, emigrate to America, "and leave all their children and families behind them, a load upon the bounty of the public." What must be the general misery of this country, so highly favoured by nature, when the *least* miserable part of its labouring population are eager to escape from their wretchedness, not merely by an eternal separation from all those connected with them by nature and affection, but by leaving them "a load on the bounty of the public," that is, to be supported by the charity of those who are too poor to emigrate? I am not sure whether I should not infer as intense suffering from Mr. Gabbitt's facts, as from the Bishop of Limerick's description of a dispossessed tenantry (p. 144), "without

“house, without food, without money, starving;
“and almost dying in the ditches.”

Happily there is no *general* misery in England like this; but even England, rich and prosperous, and well governed as she is beyond any other European community, is not, perhaps, quite beyond the sphere of a similar calamity. We have among our institutions, and our modes of acting, some which are eminently calculated to do more than merely retard our advancement.

I confidently hope that we shall not long have to contend with them; but my hope is founded solely on the expectation that the diffusion of sound principles of Political Economy will aid our enlightened ministers with the whole strength of public opinion, and enable them to conquer the ignorance, prejudice, and individual interest which have always been opposed to every improvement.

There are, however, many reasoners, or rather talkers and writers, who admit the importance of the subject, but distrust the conclusions of the science; and profess to be guided on all questions

relating to it, not by the theories of political economists, but by the opinions of practical men, or their own common-sense.

By practical men are meant, I suppose, those who have had experience in the matters which Political Economy considers. But who has not had that experience? The revenue of all men must consist of rent, profit, or wages. They must all exchange it for commodities or services. They all know, or have equally the means of knowing, for it can be discovered only by reflection, why they set a high value upon some things, a low one upon others, and disregard a third class.

An academical body is not very commercial, but, probably, there is no one present who does not make twenty exchanges every week. If this experience is not enough to enable him to understand how the human passions act in buying and selling, he would be unable to comprehend it, though his transactions equalled in number and amount those of Baring or of Rothschild. It is, in fact, as impossible to avoid being a practical

economist, as to avoid being a practical logician. The man who, beside the daily traffic in which we are all necessarily engaged, has devoted himself to any peculiar branch of trade or manufacture, (and such is the general character of those who are called practical men,) is much more likely to have his general views contracted than extended by it. He is apt to suppose that what he thinks useful and hurtful to himself, must be useful and hurtful to the community. Thus, the poor working clothiers of Stroud attributed the public distress to the introduction of machinery in the manufacture of cloth, and Mr. Webb Hall calculated that a fall in the price of corn of 10s. a quarter would be a loss to the whole country of £20,000,000 a year.

To those who profess to be guided solely by Common-Sense, I will quote, in the first place, Dr. Whately's admirable illustration of the nature of Common-Sense, and of the absurdity of trusting to it where a better guide is to be found:—

“ By Common-Sense,” says Dr. Whately, “ is
“ meant, I apprehend, (when the term is used
“ with any distinct meaning,) an exercise of the
“ judgment unaided by any art or system of rules ;
“ such as we must necessarily employ in number-
“ less cases of daily occurrence ; in which, having
“ no established principles to guide us,—no line
“ of procedure, as it were, distinctly chalked out,—
“ we must needs act on the best extemporaneous
“ conjectures we can form. He who is eminently
“ skilful in doing this, is said to possess a
“ superior degree of Common-Sense. But that
“ Common-Sense is only our *second-best* guide—
“ that the rules of art, if judiciously framed, are
“ always desirable when they can be had, is an
“ assertion, for the truth of which I may appeal
“ to the testimony of mankind in general ; which
“ is so much the more valuable, inasmuch as it
“ may be accounted the testimony of adversaries.
“ For the generality have a strong predilection
“ in favour of Common-Sense, except in those
“ points in which they, respectively, possess the

“ knowledge of a system of rules ; but in these
“ points they deride any one who trusts to unaided
“ Common-Sense. A sailor, *e. g.*, will perhaps
“ despise the pretensions of medical men, and
“ prefer treating a disease by Common-Sense :
“ but he would ridicule the proposal of navigating
“ a ship by Common-Sense, without regard to the
“ maxims of nautical art. A physician, again,
“ will perhaps condemn Systems of Political Eco-
“ nomy, of Logic, or Metaphysics, and insist on
“ the superior wisdom of trusting to Common-
“ Sense in such matters ; but he would never
“ approve of trusting to Common-Sense in the
“ treatment of diseases. Neither, again, would
“ the architect recommend a reliance on Com-
“ mon-Sense alone in building, nor the musician
“ in music, to the neglect of those systems of
“ rules, which in their respective arts, have been
“ deduced from scientific reasoning aided by ex-
“ perience. And the Induction might be ex-
“ tended to every department of practice. Since,
“ therefore, each gives the preference to unassisted
“ Common-Sense, only in those cases where he

“ himself has nothing else to trust to, and invariably
“ resorts to the rules of art, wherever he possesses
“ the knowledge of them, it is plain that mankind
“ universally bear their testimony, though uncon-
“ sciously and often unwillingly, to the preferable-
“ ness of systematic knowledge to conjectural
“ judgments.”*

Dr. Whately's reasoning is unanswerable ; but we shall be far too favourable to most of those who profess, and perhaps sincerely, to rely on common-sense in matters of Political Economy, if we believe that they actually do so.

Political Economy was an art long before it was a science ; and neither those who first practised it, nor their advisers, were filled by knowledge, honesty, or singleness of purpose, to desire right ends, or to employ proper means.

Those who first practised it in modern Europe, (and our maxims of Political Economy have no earlier origin,) those who first endeavoured to employ the powers of government in influencing the

* Preface to the Elements of Logic.

production, distribution, and consumption of wealth, were semi-barbarous sovereigns, considering their subjects not as a trust, but a property, and desirous only to turn that property to the best and readiest account.

Their advisers were landholders, merchants, and manufacturers, each anxious only for his own immediate gain, and caring little how the rest of society might be affected by the monopoly he extorted. From the mode in which these persons pursued what they thought their individual interests, aided by national jealousy, and by the ambiguities of language, and unchecked by any sound principles, arose that unhappy compound of theoretic and practical error, the "Mercantile System." I think I may take it for granted, that all those whom I am addressing are acquainted with the outlines of that system: and I must necessarily consider it somewhat at large in my next lectures. I will say no more of it, therefore, in this place, than that it was founded in a belief, that the wealth of a country consists

solely of gold and silver, and is to be retained and increased by prohibiting the exportation of money, and by giving bounties on the exportation, and imposing restrictions on the importation of other commodities, in the hope of producing a trade in which, the imports being always of less value than the exports, the balance may be paid in money : a conduct, as wise as that of a tradesman who should part with his goods only for money ; and instead of employing their price in paying his workmen's wages, or replacing his stock, should keep it for ever in his till.

As is the case, however, with every long-standing abuse, so many persons are immediately interested in supporting particular parts of the system, and the theory on which it is founded, so long commanded universal assent, that ninety-nine men out of a hundred imbibe it with their earliest education. Terms which imply the truth of the theory, and, consequently, the propriety of the practice, have even become a part of our language. A trade in which money is supposed to

be received in exchange for goods, is called a trade with a *favourable* balance ; duties imposed to give monopolies to particular classes of producers, are called *protecting* duties ; applications of the public revenue, to divert capital and labour from their natural employment, are called *bounties*. The consequence of all this is, that men who fancy they are applying common-sense to questions of Political Economy, are often applying to them only common prejudice. Instead of opposing, as they fancy, experience to theory, they are opposing the theory of a barbarous age to the theory and experience of an enlightened one.

There never was a man of stronger common-sense, a man more fitted to draw accurate conclusions from few or doubtful premises, than Napoleon. He had an utter horror of Political Economy ; the principles of which, he said, if an empire were built of granite, would grind it to powder. On such subjects he trusted to common-sense. And his common-sense was an undistinguishing

acceptance of the whole theory of the mercantile system.

It appears, from his conversations at St. Helena, that he fully believed that the continent must be a loser by its commerce with England, and that it must be so on account of the excellence and cheapness of English commodities. These abominable qualities must, he thought, enable us, in the jargon of the theory, to undersell the continent in its own market, and ultimately produce its ruin, through that unfavourable balance of trade, in which, what is received is of greater value than what is given. He thought that he could put an end to this trade by his continental system ; without doubt the principal object of that system was to ruin England ; but he appears to have implicitly believed, that it was also a blessing to the continent. The murmurs of his subjects and allies he treated like the complaints of spoiled children, who do not know what is for their own good, and who, when experience has made them wiser, will embrace from choice what they have submitted to

from necessity. There can be no doubt, I think, that these opinions, and the obstinacy into which they led him, were the ultimate causes of his downfall.

But can they be said to have been founded on common-sense? If Napoleon had trusted to his own powerful sense, if he had not been misled by a theory as wild as it is generally received, could he have believed that the Continent was injured by enjoying an advantageous market, and was injured precisely in the proportion in which that market was advantageous?

The length to which this lecture has extended prevents me from dwelling on the many other prejudices which profess to derive their sanction from the much-abused term "common-sense." I will only suggest, as instances, the common opinion that the unproductive consumption of opulent individuals and of governments, the mere waste of armies and of courts, is beneficial to the other members of society, because, to use the vague and unintelligible language of common conversa-

tion, "it promotes the circulation of money;" and the equally common error, that a fall in the price of subsistence, arising from its abundance, is injurious to the manufacturing classes, because it diminishes the market for their commodities. These opinions, setting aside their error, are so paradoxical, that I cannot conceive a man with a mind so constituted as to admit them unhesitatingly if they were presented to him when perfectly unbiassed. But they are favourable to the interests, or to the supposed interests, of the most influential members of every community. They have been so long repeated, in so many shapes, and on so many occasions, that they have become "familiar in our ears as household words;" and there is not a more common mistake than to suppose, that because a proposition is trite it must be true.

In the early part of this lecture I stated that the theoretic branch of Political Economy—that which explains the nature, production, and distribution of wealth—would be found to rest on a few general

propositions, the result of observation, or of consciousness. The propositions to which I alluded are these :—

Firstly. That wealth consists of all those things, and of those things only, which are transferable ; which are limited in quantity ; and which, directly or indirectly, produce pleasure or prevent pain : or, to use an equivalent expression, which are susceptible of exchange ; (including under exchange, hire, as well as absolute purchase ;) or, to use a third equivalent expression, which have value.

Secondly. That every person is desirous to obtain, with as little sacrifice as possible, as much as possible of the articles of wealth.

Thirdly. That the powers of labour, and of the other instruments which produce wealth, may be indefinitely increased by using their products as the means of further production.

Fourthly. That, agricultural skill remaining the same, additional labour employed on the land within a given district, produces a less proportionate return. And,

Fifthly. That the population of a given district is limited only by moral or physical evil, or by deficiency in the means of obtaining those articles of wealth, or, in other words, those necessities, decencies, and luxuries, which the habits of the individuals of each class of the inhabitants of that district lead them to require.

The second of these propositions is a matter of consciousness ; the others are matter of observation. I shall devote my next lectures, and probably the whole of the present and the next year's course, to the illustration (for it can scarcely be said to require proof) of the second proposition, and to the proof and illustration of the others ; and in my subsequent reasonings, I shall assume them all as data.

If these premises are true, I shall be right while I argue from them correctly : that I shall always succeed in doing so, on so abstract a subject, where the relations are so various, and the nomenclature is so defective, of course is not to be hoped ; but happily I address an audience too

acute to suffer my errors to pass undetected, and too friendly not to inform me of them.

I shall endeavour, in all my discussions, and particularly in the introductory ones, to make use of as few terms as possible which, from their vagueness or their technicality, require explanation, without previously defining them. The reasonings in Political Economy are, however, so mutually dependent, that it is seldom possible to define one term without introducing into the definition others equally obscure. The best course in a written treatise is that adopted by M. Say, who has affixed to his valuable work on Political Economy a list of definitions. But it is impossible to imitate his example in *viva voce* lectures: for such a list is, in fact, an epitome of the theoretical branch of the science, which the attention of no listener could follow, as the beginning must be unintelligible without the end. Dr. Whately's kindness in permitting me to append to his logic a collection of economical definitions, has a little alleviated this difficulty. That work is probably

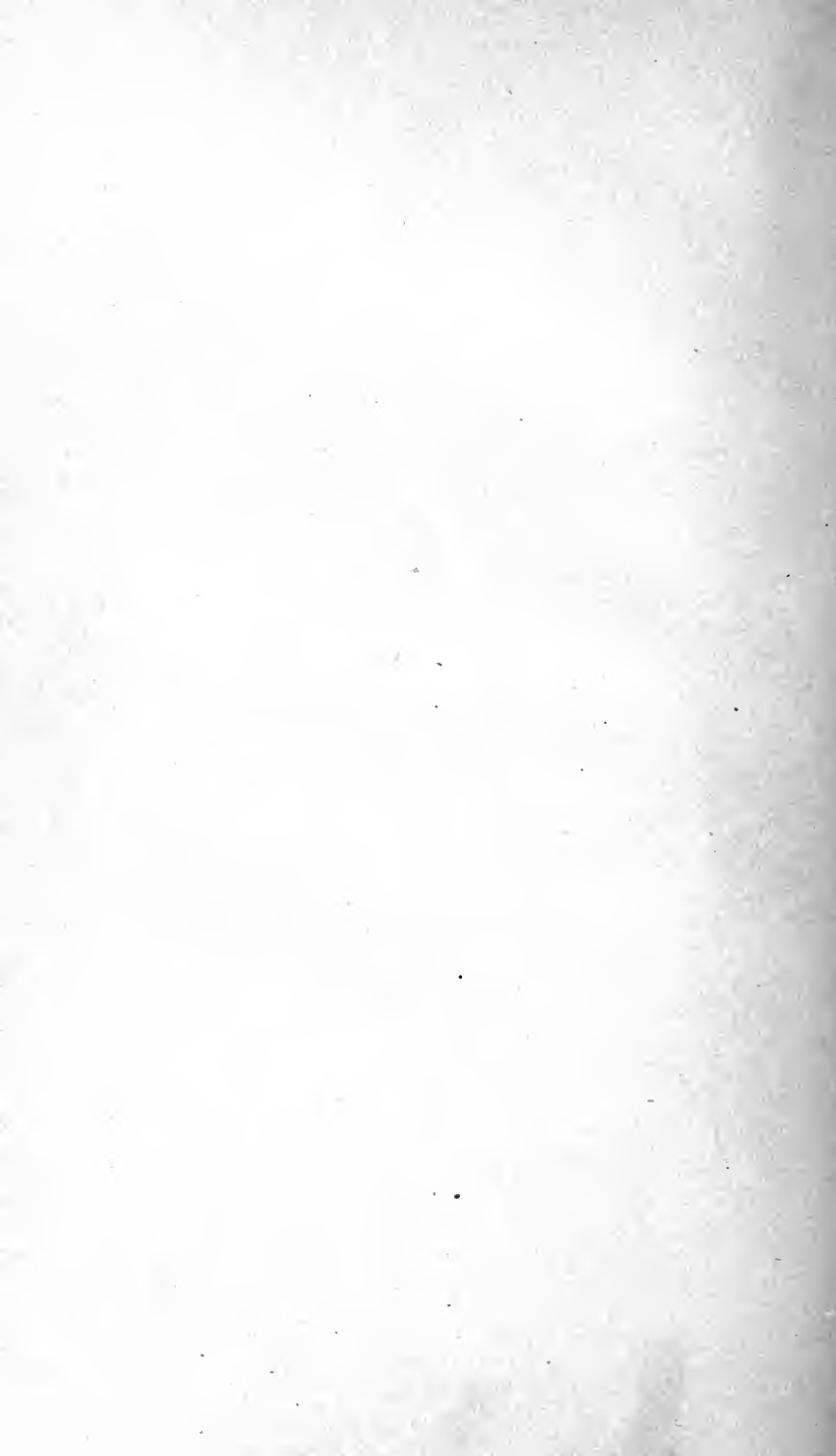
in the hands of the greater part of my hearers ; and, as most people begin reading a book by the Appendix, I think I may take it for granted that they have looked through the definitions in question. I almost regret now, that I did not suggest in each place the definition which appeared to me the most convenient. In its present state, however, that collection will enable even those who are unacquainted with the outline of the science to form a general notion of the meaning of its principal terms, when I am forced, as must sometimes be the case, to use them without previous explanation.

Another difficulty, arising from the same source, is the necessity which will frequently arise of arguing from premises which have been simply assumed, as if they have been conceded. Thus, the whole reasoning of my next lectures will assume “ that every person is desirous to obtain, with as little sacrifice as possible, as much as possible of the articles of wealth.” I shall endeavour to avoid doing this tacitly, ex-

cept where, as is perhaps the case with the proposition I have just stated, the assumed premise is self-evident. But expressly or tacitly, I shall be forced to do it continually.

FINIS.

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